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Technical cooperation among developing countries

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TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Draft report of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries
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Contents

Chapter		*Paragraphs*	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–12	2
II.	Attendance and opening of the session	13–23	3
	A. Date and place of the session	13–14	3
	B. Attendance	15–22	3
	C. Opening of the session	23	4
III.	Reports on implementation	24–47	4
	A. Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations as the President of the Committee at its thirteenth session	24–25	4
	B. Statement by the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme	26–30	4
	C. Introduction of the reports by the Director of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries: highlights of the progress reports	31–47	5

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Chapter I

Introduction

1. In accordance with recommendation 37 of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries,[1] as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 33/134 of 19 December 1978, a high-level meeting of all States participating in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was convened at Geneva from 26 May to 2 June 1980 to carry out an overall, intergovernmental review of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) within the United Nations development system. The report of the first session of the intergovernmental body[2] was considered by the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session. In its resolution 35/202 of 16 December 1980, the General Assembly decided to change the name of the high-level meeting to High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and requested the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme to convene the next session of the Committee under the same organizational and procedural arrangements as had been made for the high-level meeting.

2. The second session of the High-level Committee met in New York from 1 to 8 June 1981 and its report[3] was considered by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session. In accordance with the agreement reached during the second session of the High-level Committee, the structure of its third session consisted of the Committee in plenary meeting and only one working group, and this practice has been followed for subsequent sessions.

3. The third session of the High-level Committee met in New York from 31 May to 6 June 1983 and its report[4] was considered by the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session.

4. The fourth session was held in New York from 28 May to 3 June 1985. Its report[5] was considered by the General Assembly at its fortieth session.

5. The fifth session was held in New York from 18 to 22 May 1987 and its report[6] was adopted on 27 May 1987. The General Assembly considered that report at its forty-second session.

6. The sixth session was held in New York from 18 to 22 September 1989 and its report[7] was adopted on 29 September 1989. The General Assembly reviewed that report at its forty-fourth session.

7. The seventh session was held in New York from 28 to 31 May 1991 and its report[8] was adopted on 6 June 1991. The General Assembly considered that report at its forty-sixth session.

8. The eighth session was held in New York from 25 to 28 May 1993 and its report[9] was adopted on 4 June 1993. The General Assembly considered that report at its forty-eighth session.

9. The ninth session was held in New York from 30 May to 2 June 1995. The General Assembly considered that report[10] at its fiftieth session.

10. The tenth session was held in New York from 5 to 9 May 1997. The General Assembly considered that report[11] at its fifty-second session.

11. The eleventh session was held in New York from 1 to 4 June 1999. The General Assembly considered that report[12] at its fifty-fourth session.

12. The twelfth session was held in New York from 29 May to 1 June 2001. The General Assembly considered that report[13] at its fifty-sixth session.

Chapter II

Attendance and opening of the session

A. Date and place of the session

13. The thirteenth session of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries was held in New York from 27 May to 30 May 2003.

14. In accordance with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 35/202, the session was convened by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme under the usual procedural arrangements.

B. Attendance

15. The following Member States of the United Nations participating in UNDP were represented at the session:

TO BE INSERTED

16. The following regional commissions were represented:

TO BE INSERTED

17. The following United Nations bodies, funds and programmes were also represented:

TO BE INSERTED

18. Representatives of the following specialized agencies and related organizations attended the session:

TO BE INSERTED

19. The following intergovernmental organizations, which received a standing invitation to participate as observers in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly, were represented at the session:

TO BE INSERTED

20. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations attended the session as observers:

TO BE INSERTED

21. The following private-sector organizations that received an invitation to attend the thematic session on "enhancing the role of the private sector in promoting South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation", attended that session:

TO BE INSERTED

22. The following individuals who received a special invitation to attend the session as keynote speaker and/or panellist attended the session:

TO BE INSERTED

C. Opening of the session

23. The thirteenth session of the High-level Committee was opened, on behalf of the Secretary-General, by the President of the thirteenth session, Ambassador Boniface Chidyausiku of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Chapter III

Reports on implementation

A. Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations as the President of the Committee at its thirteenth session

24. After calling the meeting to order, the President gave a brief condolence message to the people of Algeria on the sad loss of lives from the earthquake in that country. He requested delegates to observe a minute of silence in their honour.

25. Before calling on the delegates to make their presentations, the President announced the appointment of Ambassador Milos Alcalay of Venezuela as Chair of the Working Group, which would begin deliberations on Thursday, 29 May, and report back to the plenary session on 30 May. He also requested that delegates give the Chairman and the entire Working Group their maximum support in order to enable them to do their work efficiently. The President then invited the first speaker on his list to give his presentation.

B. Statement by the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

26. The Associate Administrator observed that the thirteenth session of the High-level Committee had special significance in that it coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Conference on promoting technical cooperation among developing countries. He remarked that the Buenos Aires Conference has had a lasting impact and captivating message for the development community and that the formula for cooperation provided by the Buenos Aires Plan of Action is as relevant today as it was twenty-five years ago.

27. He noted the trend of increasing South-South cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, cultural exchanges and exchanges of expertise and ideas, citing examples of subregional groupings such as ASEAN, MERCOSUR and SADC. He highlighted some of the lessons learned from South-South alliances over the past 25 years, including the necessity to focus on those priorities that command common agreement. He mentioned HIV/AIDS as an example of an area of collaboration for most countries of the South. He noted that Brazil, India, Senegal, Thailand and Uganda had developed very successful models for dealing with the stigma, discrimination, prevention of new infections and mitigation of the impact of the disease.

28. Another important lesson was that South-South cooperation provided a means of mitigating the risks and seizing the opportunities presented by globalization. For example, young men and women in Ghana have taken up Internet-based jobs to provide services for clients in the United States. In the future, South-South cooperation should explore more and better ways to channel some of the policies and practical means that have contributed to the build-up of high-tech expertise in such countries as Costa Rica, India, Malaysia, South Africa and Thailand to other developing countries to promote job creation through the use of information and communications technologies.

29. Experience also showed that the traditional form of government-to-government alliances, while still useful, was no longer adequate; South-South cooperation required building broader partnerships. Forging people-to-people alliances and networks built around issues of interest to the peoples of the South was a more effective approach. This type of alliance was used successfully in such areas as the fight against land mines, the struggle to reduce the price of HIV/AIDS drugs, the efforts to put pressure on oil companies to clean up their oil spills, and the fight to cancel or reschedule the debt of poor countries. This approach would also enable the transformation of the Millennium Development Goals into family and community development goals.

30. In his concluding remarks, the Associate Administrator stated that in rethinking South-South cooperation, the aim should be to expand the circle of actors to include the private sector and civil-society organizations. In this regard, the challenge was to create environments that would be conducive to investment in the South and to enforce regulations requiring corporations to adhere to principles of corporate social responsibility. For its part, UNDP would continue to seek a more robust and results-oriented approach to South-South cooperation and to ensure that South-South cooperation would permeate the culture of doing business at headquarters and in country offices around the world.

C. Introduction of the reports by the Director of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries: highlights of the progress reports

31. The Director of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries congratulated Ambassador Boniface Chidyausiku on his election as President of the thirteenth session of the High-level Committee on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and also paid tribute to Ambassador Kitti-khoun, the outgoing President of the twelfth session. The Director stated that in preparing the reports to be presented to the Committee, the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries had taken into account the fact that the thirteenth session was being held on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Buenos Aires Conference for promoting technical cooperation among developing countries, and in light of that, the report presented a broad view of technical cooperation among developing countries. The Director noted that the outgoing Committee had allowed the parts of the report dealing with the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the New Directions Strategy to be combined under one heading; this format has been used in the present report. In highlighting various aspects of the reports, including key recommendations, she noted that South-South cooperation had become the mainstream modality in all regions of the developing world.

Review of progress in the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of action and the new directions strategy for technical cooperation among developing countries

32. Two important conclusions were reached based on the indicators, observations and information obtained from developing countries. While it was clear that there was increased technical cooperation among developing countries, this cooperation was mostly ad hoc and not always a result of government policy. The increase in cooperation could be explained in part by the growing trends towards regional and subregional integration among developing countries, which in itself has had the effect of increasing opportunities for cooperation, and partly by the efforts of donor countries, international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have consistently promoted South-South cooperation. On the other hand, the ad hoc nature of this cooperation could be partially attributed to the changes that have taken place in governance, trade and international relations since the Buenos Aires Conference. For example, many Governments have moved away from the command philosophy prevalent at the time of the conference.

33. In spite of these setbacks, a considerable number of Governments had established vibrant programmes on technical cooperation among developing countries. Most of the countries had units within ministries to deal with issues of South-South cooperation and their budget allocations ranged from a few thousand dollars in some countries to tens of millions of dollars in others. The areas of cooperation varied among countries, with the most common being agriculture, education and communication, trade and investment, environment, infrastructure, science and technology and production and employment. Unfortunately, debt relief and management did not receive widespread recognition as possible areas of cooperation nor did land-locked countries target areas of common concern to them.

34. The situation was different among the pivotal countries, however, where indications were that cooperation among developing countries was more widespread and diverse. Malaysia, for example, has been running a programme since 1980 to provide training and consultative services to other developing countries in project planning and management, information and communications technology, public administration, poverty eradication and diplomacy. China also reported activities that included joint research and networking in various sectors. Several other pivotal countries also had information on the Internet indicating their preference for South-South cooperation. This has led to growing interaction

among pivotal countries. For example, trade between China and India grew from $264.8 million in 1991 to $4.3 billion in 2002.

35. As noted earlier, most technical cooperation among developing countries occurred within the framework of regional and subregional integration. Some notable examples include the initiation of the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD), the first Annual Report on Integration in Africa (ARIA-2002) presented by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and also the Training Centre for Regional Integration (CEFIR) in Uruguay – an initiative of the European Union and the Rio Group.

36. South-South cooperation is indeed becoming a mainstream modality in all regions and most sectors. It has drawn substantial and increasing support from developed countries, and, although widely perceived to be inadequate, the scope of ongoing support for activities relating to technical cooperation among developing countries is quite substantial.

37. The New Directions Strategy calls for a more strategic approach in technical cooperation among developing countries, focusing on priority issues that would be likely to have a major development impact on a large number of developing countries. This requires all partners to consider increasing their allocations for technical cooperation among developing countries as well as identifying new funding modalities to promote South-South cooperation, such as triangular cooperation and private-sector funding.

38. The main hindrance to cooperation was identified by both developing countries and donors/international agencies as the lack of information. That notwithstanding, most of the countries conceded that they were aware of the Web of Information for Development (WIDE) database maintained by the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, although few claimed to make more than occasional use of it.

39. Among developed countries, support for South-South cooperation has been very encouraging. Some notable examples include the following. Japan has a partnership programme to encourage economically robust developing countries to become donors in their own right. To date, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Mexico, Singapore, Thailand and Tunisia have participated in this emerging-donor partnership which sets targets, shares costs and provides expertise for training programmes in the recipient countries. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership aims to establish a free trade area by 2010 that will include the European Union and its 12 Mediterranean partners: Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (Maghreb); Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Syrian Arab Republic (Mashrek); and Cyprus, Malta and Turkey.

40. Triangular cooperation has also gained new significance in the work of UNDP as experts from the North and South form networks to conduct joint research and share technological and financial resources for development. An outstanding example of such partnership is the West Africa Rice Development Association, which developed a hybrid rice variety now known as New Rice for Africa (NERICA). The NERICA variety promises to increase rice production to 744 000 tons, reducing imports in West Africa and saving the region $88 million in foreign exchange annually by 2006.

41. All organizations of the United Nations system, and especially the regional commissions, have reported on their efforts to embrace South-South cooperation in their activities. Several examples can be cited, among them programmes by FAO, ITU, UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNU and WHO, to mention only a few.

42. While there was considerable activity relating to technical cooperation among developing countries within the framework of regional and subregional groupings, only a few pivotal and developed countries gave high priority to South-South cooperation in terms of both policy and project activity. This generally resulted in limited information and statistics as well as a lack of reliable estimates of the amounts being spent on technical cooperation among developing countries. This was true at the national, regional and international levels but very few governments have addressed the need to create national databases of experts and capabilities.

Consideration of the reports of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

43. The report covered issues that the High-level Committee resolved to address at its thirteenth session. For example, the Committee called upon the Administrator to take action to further mobilize resources for the Voluntary Trust Fund for the Promotion of South-South Cooperation. The Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries was urged to develop an effective system for the management and use of the resources of the Trust Fund. The High-level Committee also decided to review the Revised Guidelines for the Review of Policies and Procedures concerning Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and the common results framework.

44. On the Revised Guidelines for Policies and Procedures, the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries convened an inter-agency meeting for focal points for technical cooperation among developing countries. This meeting identified the limitations relating to the common results framework and resolved to develop a more proactive approach for achieving a proper attribution of activities concerning technical cooperation among developing countries and devising a suitable valuation of such activities. The guidelines have now been revised on the basis of these consultations and include a list of a number of new issues that must be taken into account when promoting activities relating to technical cooperation among developing countries. The report proposes that the High-level Committee endorse these Revised Guidelines and request the United Nations organizations and agencies to adopt them as the framework for orienting their support to South-South cooperation.

45. In the period 2001-2002, the Voluntary Trust Fund attracted contributions amounting to $750,000. These funds, together with the cost-sharing contribution of the Government of Japan to South-South cooperation and core resources, were used to fund projects in the five thematic areas set out in the New Directions Strategy. All of the projects supported were subjected to a project approval process carried out in accordance with the usual systems. In recognition of the dearth of contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund, the Special Unit has formulated a resource mobilization strategy for the period 2003-2005. This strategy takes into account the financial status of donors and is based on the formulation of marketable programmes emphasizing triangular cooperation. The High-level Committee was requested to encourage both developed and developing countries to increase contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund.

46. The report also gave a synopsis of the changing role of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and outlined some of the consequent adjustments in its objectives and organizational structure. The main focus of these changes was to enable the Special Unit to embrace both its traditional mandate of promoting technical cooperation among developing countries and its new responsibilities with respect to South-South cooperation and the mainstreaming of these approaches within the United Nations system and among strategic partners. In fulfilling this role, the Special Unit would establish close working relations with the various bureaux and units within UNDP. Furthermore, it would establish relations with other organizations and agencies of the United Nations system by promoting complementarity based on convergent interests, objectives and shared responsibilities in which each agency would bring to bear its particular sectoral competencies.

47. The mainstreaming strategy consisted of various elements to address the needs of the targeted partners. For example, the strategy for mainstreaming South-South cooperation among the United Nations organizations focused on capacity-building programmes for staff and the incorporation of South-South concepts into the programming and evaluation frameworks while emphasizing the role of catalyst, broker and facilitator when addressing the private sector, governments and NGOs.

Notes

1 *Report of the United Nations Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, Buenos Aires, 30 August - 12 September 1978* (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.78.II.A.11 and corrigendum), chap I.

2 *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/35/39 and Corr.1).

3 Ibid., *Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/36/39).

4 Ibid., *Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/38/39).

5 Ibid., *Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/40/39).

6 Ibid., *Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/42/39).

7 Ibid., *Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/44/39).

8 Ibid., *Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/46/39).

9 Ibid., *Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/48/39).

10 Ibid., *Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/50/39).

11 Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/52/39).

12 Ibid., *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 39* (A/54/39).

13 Ibid., *Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No.39* (A/56/39).